Asians and Pacific Islanders in Rural and Small-Town America

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People of Asian and Pacific Islander origin are the smallest racial minority group in rural and small-town areas, but had the most rapid rate of increase from 1980 to 1990, growing by 42 percent. They numbered 631,000 in 1990, with more than a fourth living in Hawaii. With the exception of those from Indochina, their status in education, occupation, and income is higher than that of the general population.

The Asian and Pacific Islander populations of the United States have been growing rapidly (fig. 1, table 1). Their overall numbers more than doubled from 1980 to 1990, up from 3.5 million to 7.3 million, and their growth was a sixth of all U.S. population increase. Immigration produced the major part of this extraordinary increase.

Although people of Asian and Pacific Islander origin are much more urbanized than are Americans as a whole, some members of all the groups represented are settled in rural and small-town communities. By 1990, 447,000 Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Indochinese, Asian Indians, Hawaiians, and others of southern and eastern Asian or Pacific Islander origin lived in nonmetro parts of the United States (table 1). An additional 184,000 were in rural parts of metro areas (open country and outlying towns of less than 2,500 people). These numbers were up from 323,000 (nonmetro) and 121,000 (rural metro) in 1980, an overall growth of 42 percent, despite much reclassification of territory from nonmetro to metro and rural to urban between the two censuses. Thus, it seems timely to provide a review of the history, nature, and current presence of these minority groups in rural and small-town America.

Background

Almost no Asians or Pacific Islanders resided in the United States until the early 1850's (Hawaii had not

Figure 1

Nonmetro and rural metro Asian population, 1980-90

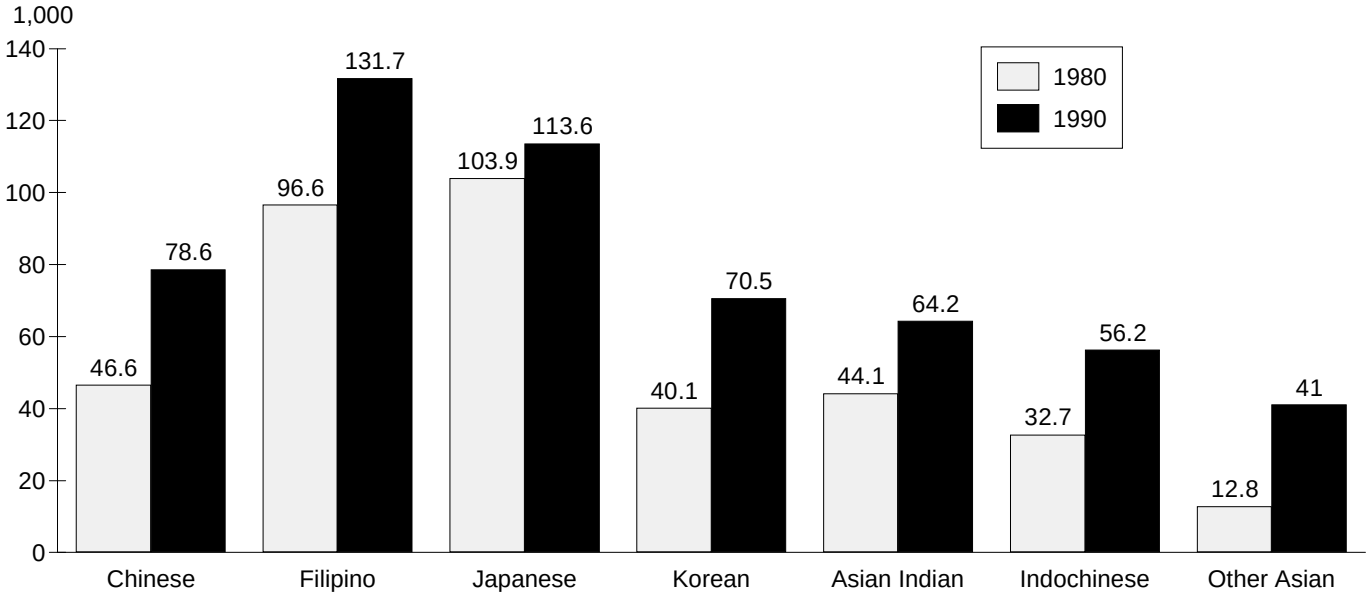

Table 1—Nonmetro and rural metro Asian and Pacific Islander population

Group/year	Total	Total nonmetro and rural metro	Non-metro	Rural metro
		Thousand		
Asian and Pacific Islander:				
1990	7,227.0	630.6	446.6	184.0
1980	3,726.4	444.1	323.4	120.7
Chinese:				
1990	1,648.7	78.6	51.0	27.6
1980	806.0	46.6	31.5	15.2
Filipino:				
1990	1,419.7	131.7	96.4	35.3
1980	774.7	96.6	70.2	26.4
Japanese:				
1990	866.2	113.6	89.9	25.7
1980	701.0	103.9	79.1	24.8
Korean:				
1990	797.3	70.5	43.7	26.8
1980	355.0	40.1	26.7	13.4
Asian Indian:				
1990	786.7	64.2	36.9	27.3
1980	361.5	44.1	28.4	15.7
Vietnamese:				
1990	593.2	31.0	21.0	10.0
1980	261.7	25.5	20.0	5.6
Cambodian:				
1990	149.0	5.6	3.9	1.7
1980	16.0	1.2	.9	.3
Laotian:				
1990	147.4	14.2	10.8	3.4
1980	47.7	5.5	4.8	.7
Hmong:				
1990	94.4	5.4	3.5	1.9
1980	5.2	.5	.5	.0
Other Asian:				
1990	373.8	41.0	28.2	12.8
1980	88.3	11.9	.1	2.8
Hawaiian:				
1990	205.5	63.9	54.5	9.4
1980	166.8	49.5	41.7	7.8
Other Pacific Islander:				
1990	145.1	15.1	10.7	3.4
1980	76.2	8.7	5.8	2.9

Note: Statistics for 1980 for total, Cambodian, Laotian, Hmong, other Asian, and other Pacific Islander are sample data. Nonmetro status is that of each census year.

Source: Compiled by Economic Research Service from 1990 and 1980 Censuses of Population.

yet been annexed). At that time, many Chinese began to come in or be brought in for rural labor in mining, farming, and railroad construction in the West. Nearly 300,000 immigrated from 1853 to 1885, before legislation barred most further inmovement. Over time, these rural settlers largely disappeared, either through return to China or movement to the cities. The Japanese and Filipino immigration that followed was also highly rural initially, but these groups, too, became predominantly urban, especially as they or their children moved out of farm labor.

The annexation of Hawaii in 1898 brought the first Polynesians under U.S. jurisdiction, as well as many additional Chinese and Japanese. The acquisition of American Samoa and Guam added other Pacific Islanders.

Until 1965, the immigration of all Asian groups into the United States was very episodic. Periods of rapid inmovement were followed by years of tight restrictions on entry. This led to distortions in age and sex composition that are still somewhat evident today among older people.

In the last third of the 20th century, Asian immigration became common again, first from the greatly liberalized provisions of the 1965 Immigration Act and then from admission of refugees from Indochina. From 1966 to 1990, 3.65 million Asian immigrants were admitted, compared with just 0.2 million in the prior quarter century. Many were of rural origin, but the vast majority headed for or were placed in urban areas–a rational choice given the generally poorer economic prospects in rural and small-town communities during most of this period. But even a minor rural share of so large a number of immigrants has been enough to begin to change the racial mix of many small communities.

Nonmetro Asians and Pacific Islanders live primarily in small urban places rather than in the countryside or villages, in contrast to other races. Thus, whereas in 1990 nearly two-thirds of nonmetro White people lived in rural territory, two-thirds of nonmetro Asians and Pacific Islanders lived in urban towns, especially in places of 10,000 or more population (fig. 2). To some extent, this may result from the late arrival of these groups in this country, but it also probably reflects their desire as visible and mostly new minorities to cluster for social purposes and to live where job opportunities and social services are most available. Only the Japanese and Asian Indians have any significant number of farms.

A noticeable feature of most Asian groups is their presence in college communities. This derives in part from wide-scale enrollment of foreign students in American schools. Thousands of these students are not permanent residents and return home after graduation, to be replaced by new students. But other thousands become expatriates who decide to settle permanently in the United States. From their ranks, and from the growing number of American-born people of Asian descent, colleges and universities increasingly have added Asian faculty members.

Chinese

When Chinese laborers (almost all men) first entered the United States from southern China, they were used as miners during the early boom years of gold and silver mining. Over 300 came to California in 1849, and could be regarded as authentic Forty Niners. The rush to the gold fields then built up so rapidly that just 3 years later, 20,000 Chinese arrived. By 1860, a fourth or more of the male labor force in a number of California gold rush counties was Chinese. Many also went to mining camps in other Western States, such as Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, and South Dakota.

The building of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 saw large-scale use of Chinese workers, and they were later used on other rail projects. In California, Chinese were recruited for drainage projects and farm fieldwork. Some became tenant farmers, and others were active in fishing and seafood processing. In Oregon, it was an immigrant Chinese, Ah Bing, who developed the popular Bing cherry in the 1870's. Chinese also became widely established in service occupations, such as cooking and laundering.

Gradually, severe resentment arose from the growth and use of cheap Chinese workers where they competed with American settlers. When augmented by racial antagonism, this resulted in serious violence against the Chinese and their eviction from many mining areas. As late as 1868, the United States had signed a treaty with China to ensure continued access to cheap labor. But anti-Chinese sentiment became so strong that it led to the Exclusion Act of 1882, which forbade further immigration of Chinese laborers. Many of the immigrants left. With few births, the number of Chinese in the United States dropped from 107,000 in 1890–of whom only 3 percent were female–to 62,000 in 1920. In this period, the remaining population shifted increasingly to urban areas, and the rural work that had brought

Table 2—Number of nonmetro/rural metro Asians and Pacific Islanders, by leading States of residence, 1990

Ethnic group/State	Population
	Thousand
Chinese	78.6
California	8.2
Hawaii	6.2
New York	6.2
Oregon	2.6
Illinois	2.6
Filipino	131.7
Hawaii	54.0
California	17.3
Washington	5.1
Alaska	4.8
Florida	3.5
Japanese	113.6
Hawaii	55.0
California	12.3
Washington	4.2
Oregon	3.2
Illinois	2.4
Korean	70.5
New York	4.6
California	3.8
Michigan	3.5
Pennsylvania	3.5
Minnesota	2.8
Vietnamese	31.0
Texas	3.3
Louisiana	3.1
Kansas	2.1
California	1.9
Pennsylvania	1.2
Cambodian	5.4
Washington	.7
California	.5
Laotian	15.0
California	1.5
Iowa	1.3
Minnesota	.9
Kansas	.8
Louisiana	.7
Hmong	6.0
California	2.4
Wisconsin	2.1
Asian Indian	64.2
California	6.2
New York	5.0
Pennsylvania	3.0
Illinois	2.7
Texas	2.6
Hawaiian	63.9
Hawaii	52.4
California	1.9
Washington	1.0
Oregon	.9
Alaska	.4

Source: Compiled by Economic Research Service from 1990 Census of Population, General Population

about the original immigration largely ended or was given up. In 1910, a fourth of American Chinese were still in rural communities, but by 1940 less than 10 percent were.

In the 1870's, some cotton plantation owners in the Mississippi Delta decided to hire Chinese workers to replace Black labor. The number hired was never large, and the attempt was short-lived. But, on a small scale, it had a lasting demographic effect. Some of the Chinese elected to stay in the Delta and established themselves as retail merchants, especially serving the Black population. Others followed. The Delta Chinese population peaked at about 1,500 in 1960, but had dropped to 1,000 by 1990 after cotton mechanization, Black outmovement, and the decline of the small groceries. Chinese grocers are still present, but the population is now a well-educated one engaged in a variety of occupations.

In Hawaii, Chinese were the first Asian immigrants sought to supply labor for the emerging sugar industry. The initial contracted group arrived in 1852, in part to offset the labor shortage created by the decline of the Hawaiian population. Additional modest numbers were brought in until about 1875. Others who had gone to the United States came to Hawaii from the American West to escape the restrictions and harassment that had developed there. But many Chinese soon left plantation work for urban and commercial life, and before the last groups arrived planters had already turned to Japan to help staff the burgeoning plantations.

During World War II, when China was a military ally, the Exclusion Act of 1882, with its extensions, was finally repealed. The postwar period saw an initial influx of refugees and war brides. Then, as with every other Asian group, inmovement became much larger and more general in character after 1965. By 1990, the Chinese population in the United States exceeded 1.6 million, having doubled since 1980. But, Chinese have so preferred central city and suburban locations that only 50,000, or 3 percent, live in nonmetro areas, with another 26,000 in the rural parts of metro areas (fig. 3).

Of the 17 mainland nonmetro counties that have 400 or more Chinese residents, 15 are university counties. Although a majority of these people may be only temporarily in the United States as students and their family members, many others are employed in professional and technical occupations. In the continental United States, the largest Chinese nonmetro population (2,000) is in and around Ithaca, New York, the site of Cornell University. Other groups of more than 1,000 are located around Corvallis, Oregon (Oregon State University), and Ames, Iowa (Iowa State University).

Aside from university locales, the largest Chinese nonmetro population is in Hawaii, numbering 5,500 people. Eighty-nine percent were American-born by 1990. Schooling levels are high, with 26 percent college graduates among adults 25 and over, the highest of any racial group in the islands, and well above the 20-percent level found in the total U.S. population. Trade, professional services, and tourism-related businesses are favored industries of work. The median nonmetro household income of Chinese in Hawaii was $39,125 in 1989–far above the U.S. metro median of $32,100–and bespeaks the financial success of this population. The transformation since the initial era of coolie labor has been remarkable.

Japanese

With the recent rapid increase in the American Filipino population, Japanese are now the second most numerous people of Asian origin in nonmetro and rural metro communities, after having been the largest for a number of decades. About 90,000 lived in nonmetro counties in 1990, with another 26,000 in outlying rural parts of metro counties.

The first Japanese settlers in the current borders of the United States were men recruited for sugarcane labor in Hawaii. A small group arrived in 1868, when the Japanese Government first permitted movement abroad. Relatively few others were brought in until 1885. But over the next 10 years, the importation of contract workers was so large that by 1894 a fifth of the population of Hawaii and nearly two-thirds of the labor force was Japanese.

Few Japanese lived in the continental United States before 1890. In the 25 years following, nearly 300,000 arrived, especially in California, to be employed in farming and as laborers in fishing, food processing, and logging. Japanese were the first commercially successful rice farmers in the Sacramento Valley, and were pioneers in reclaiming much poorly drained or desert land for fruit and truck farming. They gradually located more in towns, working as gardeners or domestic servants, running stores and other small businesses. But, their rapid growth engendered the same opposition experienced earlier by the Chinese, and, through the so-called

Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-08, the Japanese Government halted further emigration of laborers. The agreement did not seek to stop the flow of family members or brides, however. The U.S. Japanese population thus was able to evolve into a more demographically normal community, unlike the Chinese in the same era.

The onset of war with Japan in 1941 led to the forced relocation of west coast Japanese to inland camps and sites until 1945. This resulted in economic loss for many and stimulated some permanent settlement away from the west coast. But thousands returned, and California is second only to Hawaii today in number of rural and small-town Japanese residents. In Hawaii, where there had been much more assimilation, intermarriage, and racial tolerance over the years, no general wartime relocation was required.

In the years after the war, thousands of American servicemen stationed in Japan married Japanese women, who then entered the United States as "war brides." With a continued American military presence in Japan, such marriages and subsequent emigration to the United States of the spouses still occur. As with other Asian groups, a general increase in Japanese immigration took place after 1965. In addition, the major growth of Japanese exports and business investment in this country has brought in many people to manage holdings and run plants, some of which are in nonmetro towns. These employees and their families typically rotate back to Japan, but are succeeded by others.

Despite the growth of settlement on the mainland, Hawaii still contains nearly half of all nonmetro and rural metro Japanese. Most work in the service, government, and retail business employment that dominates that State's economy. But there are still 2,000 Japanese farmers who operate over 40 percent of Hawaii's farms. They specialize in high-value-per-acre crops, such as fruits, horticultural products, and vegetables.

In California, some 1,800 Japanese worked as farm operators or managers in 1990. Their largest presence is in Fresno County, where they primarily produce tree fruits and are regarded as excellent farmers. Elsewhere, the largest mainland Japanese farming settlement is in easternmost Oregon, in the irrigated Snake River Plains of Malheur County. Some of the farms were established after World War II by families who had been displaced from the west coast during the war. Today there are about 60 farms, engaged in various irrigated row crops and dairying, with above-average economic status. Additional Japanese farmers are scattered through other parts of the West.

Nonfarm rural and small-town Japanese are rather widely distributed, with less concentration than is true of Filipinos or even the much less numerous Chinese and Koreans (fig. 4). Japanese in the United States are generally well educated and very prosperous, with poverty rates barely half as high as those of the total population.

They have, however, restricted childbearing to a level far below that of other ethnic groups. In nonmetro Hawaii, where three-fifths of all nonmetro Japanese live, Japanese women 35-44 years old in 1990 had borne just 168 births per each 100 women. The final number when their childbearing years are completed is unlikely to exceed 185 births per 100 women. With at least 205 births per 100 women needed for generational replacement, this population faces ultimate decline unless there is further immigration or increased family size. In the largest mainland rural Japanese population (1,800 in Fresno County, California), Japanese women age 35 to 44 had borne an extraordinarily low 120 births per 100 women, while all other Asian groups in the county were above 200. A comparable figure for Japanese in all nonmetro and rural metro areas is not available, but is believed also to be below replacement. Thus, for reasons not readily apparent, American Japanese–both metro and nonmetro, urban and rural–have chosen a level of childbearing well below generational replacement, despite a high degree of economic and financial success.

Filipinos

As noted, Filipinos supplanted Japanese during the 1980's as the largest Asian rural and small-town minority, numbering 133,000 in nonmetro and rural metro territory in 1990. (Chinese are the largest Asian group in metro urban areas). The first Filipino settlements stemmed from recruitment of laborers in 1906 to work in the Hawaiian sugar industry, and thereafter on pineapple plantations as well. The cutoff of new Japanese labor by the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907-08 was a major stimulant to the hiring of Filipinos, as was the desire of the growers to inhibit labor demands by having an ethnic mix among workers. More than 100,000 Filipinos came to Hawaii between 1906 and 1931. Many returned to the Philippines, but thousands remained, while others

went on to California in the 1920's to do farmwork there.

When the Philippine Islands came under American jurisdiction after the Spanish-American War of 1898, the residents became U.S. nationals and were able to enter the United States freely. Direct inmovement of male Filipino labor to the mainland became especially large in the 1920's. In 1934, however, when the Tydings-McDuffie Act established the Philippines as a commonwealth in anticipation of future independence, the status of Filipinos as U.S. nationals was abolished. Immigration was largely halted until after World War II, and did not become significant again until after 1965.

In Hawaii, farm employment was curtailed drastically following a strike and mechanization after World War II, and most Filipinos there had to seek urban or other nonfarm jobs. As late as 1960, Filipino workers were a mainstay of the California farm workforce, but workers of Mexican origin have since come to dominate that work, and the aging Filipino farm group has not been replenished.

The extensive immigration of Filipinos into the United States since 1965 has been quite different from the earlier movement. The more recent immigrants have included many well-educated people in professional occupations, entering as families, with a balance of the sexes and a number of children. In contrast, the earlier movement of male workers was from a poorer, more rural stratum of society. The largest nonmetro mainland contingent of Filipinos today, by far, is in California (17,000).

As a product of the long association of the Philippine Islands with the United States, Filipinos have been more prone than other Asian groups to join the U.S. Armed Forces as a career, especially the Navy. In 1970, 10 percent of all employed Filipino men in rural America were military personnel, three times the representation of any other Asian group. The relatively greater affinity of U.S. Filipinos for military work has continued since then, although the Armed Forces make up a smaller percentage of the labor force today. The presence of two large U.S. military bases in the Philippines until recently also produced numerous marriages of Filipino women to American servicemen. So many of these families and Filipino servicemen live on or around nonmetro military bases that 20 percent of the entire nonmetro Filipino population outside of Hawaii is found in 42 military-base counties. By comparison, these counties have less than 4 percent of the nonmetro population of all races.

The largest Filipino rural and small-town population, by far, is that in Hawaii (table 2, fig. 5). It numbered 54,000 in 1990, or 18 percent of that State's nonmetro and rural metro residents. The educational and economic position of Filipinos in Hawaii is intermediate between that of Japanese and ethnic Hawaiians, and is somewhat below that of nonmetro Filipinos in the rest of the United States. Compared with other Asian groups in Hawaii, Filipinos continue to work disproportionately in the remaining farm labor force and in lower skilled retail and service industry jobs, without the prominence in professional occupations that they have on the mainland.

One area of Filipino settlement that seems unlikely for a population from a tropical climate is southern Alaska, but Filipinos had gone there as early as 1910 to work in fish canneries. Over time, some remained in Alaska, even though the work that attracted them initially was seasonal. This movement has continued, with the Filipino population more than doubling from its small base in both the 1970's and the 1980's. By 1990, 4,800 people of Filipino birth or ancestry were living in nonmetro Alaska, with 4,000 in coastal towns stretching in a lengthy arc from Ketchikan in the southeastern panhandle to Unalaska in the Aleutian Islands. The rapid growth of the fish-processing industry in recent years was a major force behind this increase, but other types of work are also now pursued. The largest settlement is at Kodiak, a major fishing center, where 1,000 Filipinos were a sixth of the population in 1990. Juneau has a growing Filipino population, numbering 750 in 1990, with employment in service industries as well as in the government. A majority of Alaska's Filipinos are foreign-born, but whereas males outnumbered females by two to one as late as 1970, this imbalance was nearly ended by 1990.

As a whole, Filipinos in the United States have a remarkably high degree of entry into hospital and other health services jobs. Although only 6 percent of all U.S. employment is in such work, 20 percent of all Filipinos are in these jobs, especially as hospital staff. A precise figure is not available for those living in rural and small-town areas, but Filipino presence in the health field is high in these places as well, except in Hawaii. Because of the large influx of nurses and other female health workers, the labor force participation of American Filipino women is very high.

Koreans

Koreans are yet another population group who first emigrated to American territory to fill the seemingly endless need for new sources of farm labor in Hawaii. Recruitment began in 1903, but ended just 2 years later when Japan took control of Korea and halted the arrangement. However, about 7,000 Koreans entered Hawaii in this brief span. Their descendants, along with many recent immigrants, live largely in the Honolulu urbanized area today, and most have intermarried with non-Koreans.

Some of the early Koreans in Hawaii moved on to California, initially for farmwork. But re-migration of both Koreans and Japanese from Hawaii to the mainland was halted by presidential decree in 1907. Only after World War II did emigration to the mainland from Korea again develop, first with refugees and orphans from the Korean War of 1950-53. Of more lasting duration is the flow of brides of U.S. military personnel (28,000 during 1950-75) that continues today.

With the liberal provisions of the Immigration Acts of 1965 and 1986, movement to the United States has become very attractive and achievable to Koreans. Their immigration averaged 34,000 persons per year in the 1980's. Korean immigrants since 1965 have included an above-average proportion of professionals and independent business owners. The vast majority are metro urban residents, but some live and work in nonmetro places, and Koreans are also inclined to live in the rural portions of metro areas.

The 71,000 Koreans in rural and small-town areas are widely distributed (fig. 6). New York has the largest number of any State (4,700), but only 7 percent of the total. Because so many of the women have entered as brides of non-Korean military personnel, the ratio of women to men is very high. In 1990, females age 16 or older outnumbered males by nearly three to one among nonmetro Koreans, a much higher proportion of females than the four-to-three ratio among metro urban Koreans, and a radical contrast to the very low incidence of women among American Asian groups in the past. The larger proportion of females among Koreans in rural and small-town areas results from the greater role that military marriages have played in bringing Korean women and their children to such places than to urbanized areas. Although Korean men do not have an above-average rate of military enlistment, the large number of Korean wives and children of non-Korean personnel has led to the location of a sixth of the entire nonmetro Korean population in military base counties. The biracial children seem generally listed as Korean in the census. The age distribution of this population is thus very unusual in that the males (lacking many adults) are much younger than the females, with a male nonmetro median age of 16 years, compared with 26 years for females. Of the 12 nonmetro counties outside of Hawaii that have 400 or more Koreans, 8 have large army bases. The other four have major universities.

In Hawaii, about 1,700 Koreans live in the nonmetro islands, mostly in Hawaii and Maui. Their numbers have grown rapidly since 1980 (57 percent), partly from recent immigration. But, with 70 percent still native-born, they contrast with the metro Korean Hawaiians who are just 43 percent native-born. Even though nonmetro Hawaii does not have many military families, Korean women outnumber men by a three-to-two ratio. A third of all employed nonmetro Koreans in the islands work in retail trade, a considerably higher proportion than found for any other racial group in Hawaii. In part, this results from the larger presence of women among Korean workers, for women typically work more in retail jobs than do men. But it also reflects the higher interest among Koreans in self-employment, regardless of sex.

Asian Indians

Few people, other than occasional visitors, came to the United States from the Indian subcontinent before 1900. But, beginning in 1904, male Indian workers began to come down into the west coast States after entering British Columbia. They worked initially in the timber industry, but were expelled by hostile White workers, after which many moved south to the Central Valley of California to do farm labor.

This inflow of Asian Indians was never large. It was nearly ended by the Exclusion Act of 1923 and, with few women to marry and some return movement to India, the population dwindled. Since 1965, though, the number of immigrants from India has risen to over 30,000 per year, and there is now a large base of women and children as well as adult men. About 36,000 lived in nonmetro areas and 26,000 in rural parts of metro areas in 1990. In many rural and small-town areas, Asian Indians are associated with universities. Many others are professionals and business people, especially in fields such as health services and engineering. Indians have created a notable niche in motel ownership and operation. In the late 1970's, an estimated two-fifths of all motels

in the association of motels located on Interstate Highway 75 (which runs from Michigan to Florida) were run by Asian Indians. (The location of Asian Indians is shown in fig. 7.) Indian immigrants benefit by their origin in a nation where English is an associate official language.

There is a wide contrast in social and educational status between the early Indian immigrants and the more recent arrivals. The earliest were poorly educated rural people, while those coming after 1965 were more likely to be well-educated professionals. Many of the most recently arrived merchants and business people are relatives of professionally employed people who preceded them.

The largest rural Asian Indian settlement is in the Sacramento Valley of California, around Yuba City in Sutter County. Over 1,100 live in the rural parts of this small metro area, primarily engaged in farming. Many others involved in agriculture live in nearby towns. The settlement dates from 1908, but has continued to grow from immigration, with three-fourths of current residents foreign-born. The first immigrants were hired workers on rice or fruit farms, but some succeeded in becoming tenant farmers or in creating partnerships with non-Asians to circumvent laws against Asian ownership of land. They are respected orchardists today, but the poverty rate in 1990 was high at 20 percent. To some extent, this reflects above-average family size and the presence of many fairly recent newcomers. Another well-established Asian Indian farming community is in Fresno County. This group, like that in Sutter County, has its principal origin in the Punjab area of northern India. The farmers in Fresno are primarily grape growers. There is still some entry of new farmers from India who have the funds to become landowners.

As modest in numbers as the early Asian Indian farmers and farmworkers were, it was from their ranks that the first Asian-born member of Congress came. Dilap Singh Saund came to the United States as a young man. He began as a farmhand, acquired graduate degrees from the University of California, and became a rancher in Imperial County, California. Just 10 years after citizenship for Indian immigrants was first permitted, he was elected to Congress in 1956 and served for three terms.

Because so many Asian Indians, especially men, come to the United States today for university education, all 6 of the nonmetro counties that have at least 400 Asian Indians are university areas. Many have remained to take academic or technical work. Ninety percent of all nonmetro Asian Indian males age 25 or older have 1 year or more of college education. Even though the comparable percentage for women (67 percent) is much lower, the education of Asian Indian women is still well above that of women in the general population or in most other Asian and Pacific Islander groups.

Indochinese

U.S. participation in the war in Vietnam brought hundreds of thousands of Indochinese people to this country as postwar refugees from ethnic groups that had been almost unrepresented here earlier– Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong (a distinct ethno-cultural group from Laos). This movement began with the fall of South Vietnam in 1975 and has continued ever since. The Indochinese thus have come to the United States as a displaced people rather than as recruited labor or in the more conventional voluntary way. As refugees, their immigration was organized and sponsored by the Federal Government and by private organizations, often church-affiliated.

Unlike earlier Asian groups, the refugees were not concentrated in Hawaii or the West Coast, but were placed in widely distributed locations, a number of which were small communities. Some locations proved relatively isolated and impractical, however, and many refugees moved on to urban places, as they were able, to be with larger groups of their countrymen. By 1990, there were 1 million Indochinese in the United States, of whom nearly 600,000 were Vietnamese. Of the grand total, only 38,000 lived in nonmetro counties and 16,000 in rural metro locations. (See fig. 8 for geographic location.) But, primarily because of the continued inflow of refugees, the number of Indochinese in rural and small-town locations grew by 77 percent from 1980 to 1990. The arrival of Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong did not begin in earnest until the 1980's, and they have, thus, typically been in this country for less than 15 years.

Economic adjustment has been difficult for the Indochinese, given the abrupt and often penniless nature of their departure from Asia, and the lack of formal education and English language skills among the most recent immigrants. One small-town economic function that they now commonly perform is labor in meatpacking and other food-processing plants. The decentralization of much of the

meatpacking industry has placed some large plants in small towns. Such plants typically have labor shortages, because the work is often deemed undesirable by much of the local labor force. Therefore, it is commonly necessary to obtain needy workers from elsewhere to whom the jobs look relatively attractive. Most often this means recruiting Hispanics, but the Indochinese are also sought.

Major examples are found in Kansas in and around Garden City, Dodge City, and Liberal. These packing-plant towns had l,100 Vietnamese and 550 other Indochinese in 1990, compared with 130 Vietnamese and a very small number of others in 1980. Another example is Tecumseh, Nebraska, where 100 Laotians had settled in a town of 1,700 people by 1990, attracted by jobs in a plant making soup ingredients. Mountain Lake, Minnesota, has become a rural focal point for Laotian industrial workers, whose presence has bolstered businesses and school enrollment in a town previously experiencing decline. In Storm Lake, Iowa, Laotians make up a fourth of the workers at a large pork plant and a tenth of those at a turkey plant. Outside of the Midwest, examples of the trend are found at Dumas, Texas, and in north Georgia, where several hundred Laotians and Vietnamese have settled near the poultry-processing plants at Cornelia and Gainesville.

Other factory jobs are sought where available. As a result, all Indochinese groups have an exceptionally high dependence on manufacturing employment, with 39 percent of their workers in such jobs nationally, compared with just 19 percent of all U.S. workers. Among Laotians, an astonishing 53 percent work in manufacturing plants. This characteristic sets the Indochinese apart from all other Asian and Pacific Islander groups, none of whom are highly represented in manufacturing.

For Vietnamese, shrimp and other fishing along the gulf coast is a notable exception to manufacturing work. The nonmetro settlements are in Aransas, Calhoun, and Matagorda Counties, Texas, and in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana. In both States, relations between the refugees and the local fishermen grew violent in early years because of competition for a limited natural resource, disputes over fishing practices, and cultural differences, such as the competitive advantage gained by intensive use of family labor among the Vietnamese. These problems have since lessened but have not ended.

Amelia, Louisiana, had become the nonmetro town with the largest Vietnamese population by 1990, where the 683 Vietnamese residents were 28 percent of the population. For "boat people" refugees, south Louisiana has some similarity in setting, climate, and religion to Vietnam (the majority of the refugees are Catholic). Although fishing is present among Amelians, work in the marine yards is more common whenever offshore oil and gas industries are thriving.

Many Indochinese farmed in their homelands. The capital-intensive nature of American farming makes entry into the business here difficult for a poor immigrant population. But by 1990, 174 Indochinese in California reported farm operation or management as their sole or principal work. In Fresno County, a number of refugees now farm small leased plots producing berries or Asian vegetables on contract. With their large families, they apply intensive hand labor to perform tasks that other farmers might do with mechanical means.

The Indochinese nationalities cluster more commonly into distinct communities within the areas where they live than is usually true of other Asians. This appears to derive from the limited time they have been in the country, their more traditional cultural background, and the fact that far fewer of them have come in as students or as partners in interracial marriages.

Household income levels are below average, with a nonmetro median of $18,800 in the 1990 Census, compared with $23,100 for the total nonmetro population. The effect of this disparity is worsened by the greater childbearing and larger household size of the Indochinese. With less income and more people per household, the Indochinese poverty rate was 30.1 percent, the highest of any Asian group, versus a national nonmetro average of 16.8 percent. In some areas, such as the Central Valley of California, poverty rates for the Laotian and Hmong people range from 55 to 75 percent in both cities and small communities alike. This is not surprising when one considers that in the rural and small-town sections of Fresno County, a majority of Indochinese (except for Vietnamese) had less than 5 years of schooling before reaching the United States and have averaged 497 children per 100 women 35-44 years old.

The exceptionally young age profile of the Indochinese, with its high proportion of children, gives this population much potential for rural population growth, regardless of the extent to which additional refugees are admitted. The disparity in education and cultural background between the parental generation and its American-oriented

children is very wide. It seems unlikely that the current extent of dependence on manufacturing jobs will persist as the younger generation matures. Whether it does or not, Indochinese minorities have become an established presence in a number of small towns, advancing in status, but with a high degree of current social service needs.

Hawaiians and All Others

Native Hawaiians, of Polynesian origin, are estimated to have numbered about 300,000 in the late 18th century, in the early days of European contact. Their population declined drastically thereafter from the consequences of Western diseases and cultural demoralization, until only 38,000 were counted in the census of 1910. Hawaiians mingled freely with the various ethnic groups who came to the islands and today they are overwhelmingly of mixed ancestry. To a certain extent, therefore, being Hawaiian today is as much a matter of values, sentiment, and cultural choice as it is of racial proportion. By 1990, 139,000 people in Hawaii reported their race as Hawaiian, of whom 52,000 lived in the nonmetro islands–principally Hawaii, Maui, Kauai, and Molokai–or in the rural parts of metro Oahu. They are more rural and small-town in residence than any other of the State's ethnic groups and make up a sixth of the nonmetro population. Some still use the native language at home.

In Hawaii, nonmetro Hawaiians are considerably younger than the other major ethnic groups, with a median age of just 25 years, compared with about 42 for Japanese and 31 for Filipinos. This probably reflects the sum of higher Hawaiian childbearing rates, the cultural acquisition of children born to mixed marriages, and somewhat less outmovement of young adults to metro areas than occurs in the other groups.

The social and economic condition of Hawaiians has typically not been as good as that of most other populations in the islands, as measured by education, income, health, or housing. Some observers believe this is at least in part a reflection of traditional culture that values social accommodation over personal achievement. In nonmetro Hawaii, 16 percent of all Hawaiians lived in households with poverty-level income in the 1990 Census, with the rate reaching 20 percent on the island of Hawaii. Nominally, this is not an extraordinary level compared with many mainland nonmetro areas, but the effect is more serious in Hawaii given the State's very high cost of living. The nonmetro poverty rate for Hawaiians is in marked contrast to the rates of just 4 percent for Japanese and 7 percent for Filipinos in the same islands.

As late as 1940, fewer than 700 Polynesians lived in the continental United States. Since World War II, however, there has been so much movement to the mainland that by 1990, 34 percent of all Hawaiians, or 72,000, were living there, along with 130,000 other Pacific Islanders. The latter are mainly from Samoa and Guam. Over half of the mainland Hawaiians have located in the west coast States, focusing on California. Just 16 percent are in nonmetro or rural metro communities.

An interesting characteristic of the nonmetro Pacific Islander groups is the extent to which they are either in military service or married to servicemen and thus living on or near military bases. A seventh of all nonmetro Hawaiians on the mainland lived in military base communities in 1990. (Among other Pacific Islanders the proportion is even higher, rising to three-tenths among Guamanians.) The economic status of Hawaiians on the mainland is generally higher than that in Hawaii.

About 56,000 other Asians and Pacific Islanders, aside from those discussed above, lived in nonmetro and rural metro locations in 1990, with Thais and Pakistanis being the most numerous. Like nonmetro Koreans, many of the adult Thais are women who married American military personnel stationed in their country. With American bases in Thailand now closed, this source of Thai growth in the United States has ended. Pakistanis are predominantly male, with a concentration in retail businesses and professional fields. Among both Thais and Pakistanis, many are young people studying at American colleges.

Conclusion

Except for Hawaiians, only a small and declining percentage of each of the various Asian and Pacific Islander populations lives in rural and small-town America. Yet the absolute growth of these ethnic groups in the United States is so large and rapid that they increased by 42 percent in nonmetro and rural metro areas from 1980 to 1990, even as they became more urban in overall location. Although Asians and Pacific Islanders were only 0.8 percent of the U.S. nonmetro and rural metro population in 1990, their increase of 186,000 persons during the 1980's

accounted for 14 percent of the total growth of nonmetro and rural metro population during the decade. Thus, their rate of gain was very disproportionate, and if such growth continues it will quickly further elevate their importance in the areas where they are settling. Except for the Japanese, their age composition is youthful and their rate of natural increase is substantial.

The individual Asian and Pacific Islander groups differ from one another in many respects, for the term combines people and racial groups of very different cultures, languages, religions, histories, and American origins. Thus, data for the overall category cannot be reliably generalized to all of its groups. But with exceptions, they show that Asians and Pacific Islanders as a whole are much better educated than the general nonmetro population, more likely to be in managerial or professional occupations, more successfully supportive of themselves (as evidenced by higher median household income), and far less susceptible to having single-parent families with their higher rates of poverty and welfare dependence.

In general, American demographic trends have tended to develop in metro areas and then disseminate out into smaller communities. This has been true of trends in fertility, mortality, marital status, and living arrangements, and is now true of Asian and Pacific Islander settlement, which is acquiring a growing rural and small-town component.

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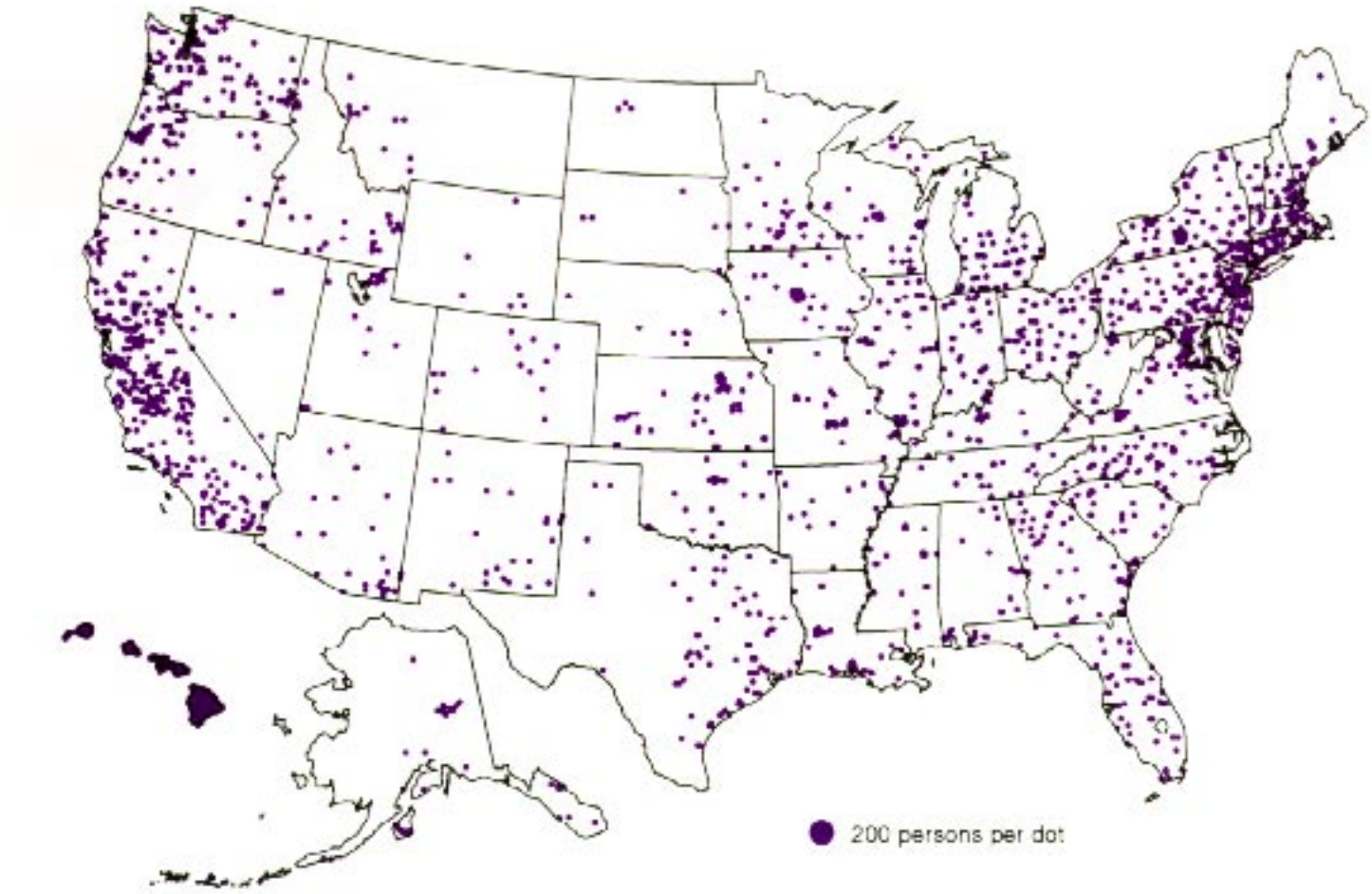
Figure 2

The nonmetro and rural metro Asian and Pacific Islander population, 1990



Data source: Bureau of the Census.
Map prepared by Economic Research Service.

Figure 3

The nonmetro and rural metro Chinese population, 1990

Data source: Bureau of the Census.
Map prepared by Economic Research Service.

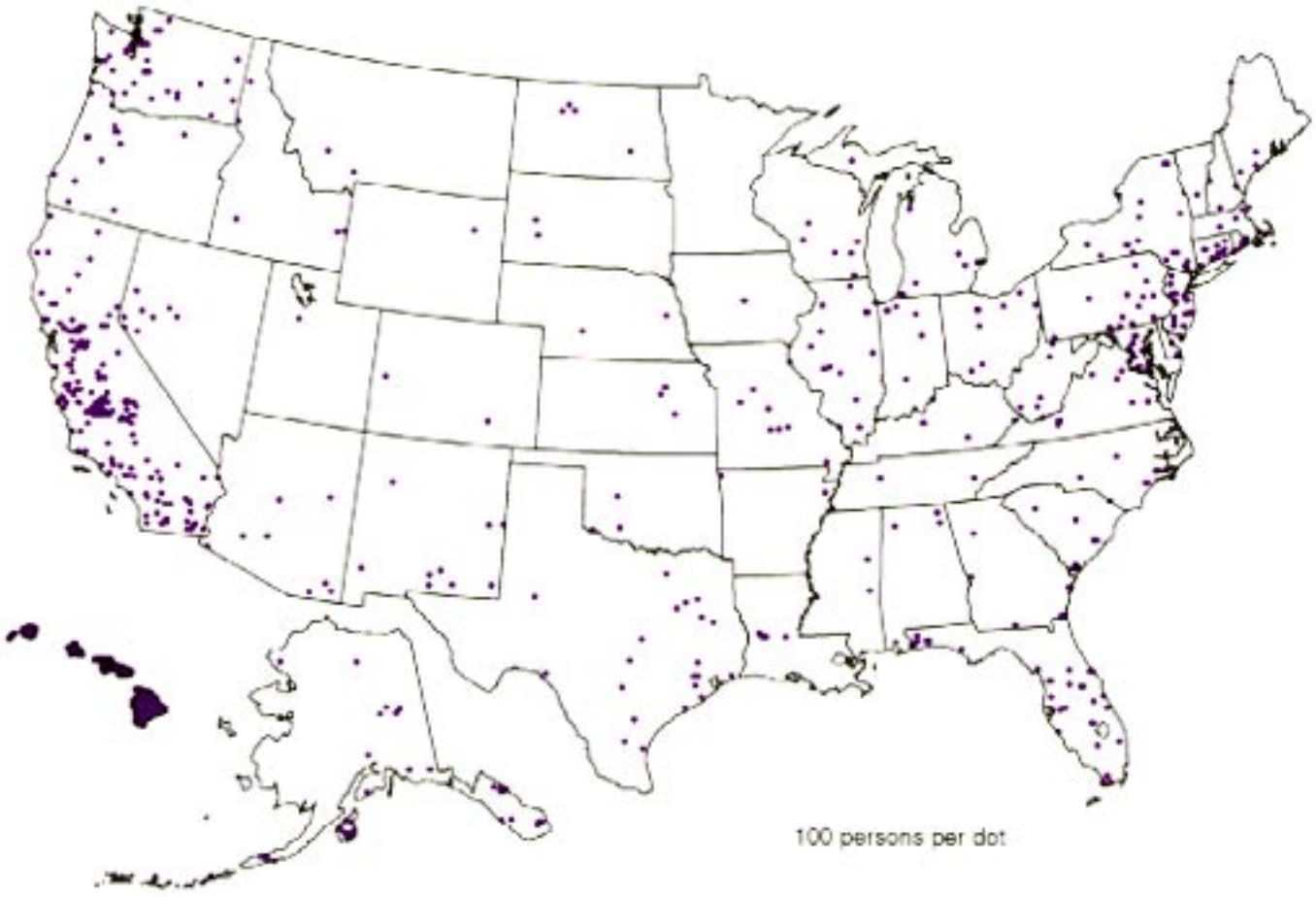
Figure 4

The nonmetro and rural metro Japanese population, 1990

Data source: Bureau of the Census.
Map prepared by Economic Research Service.

Figure 5

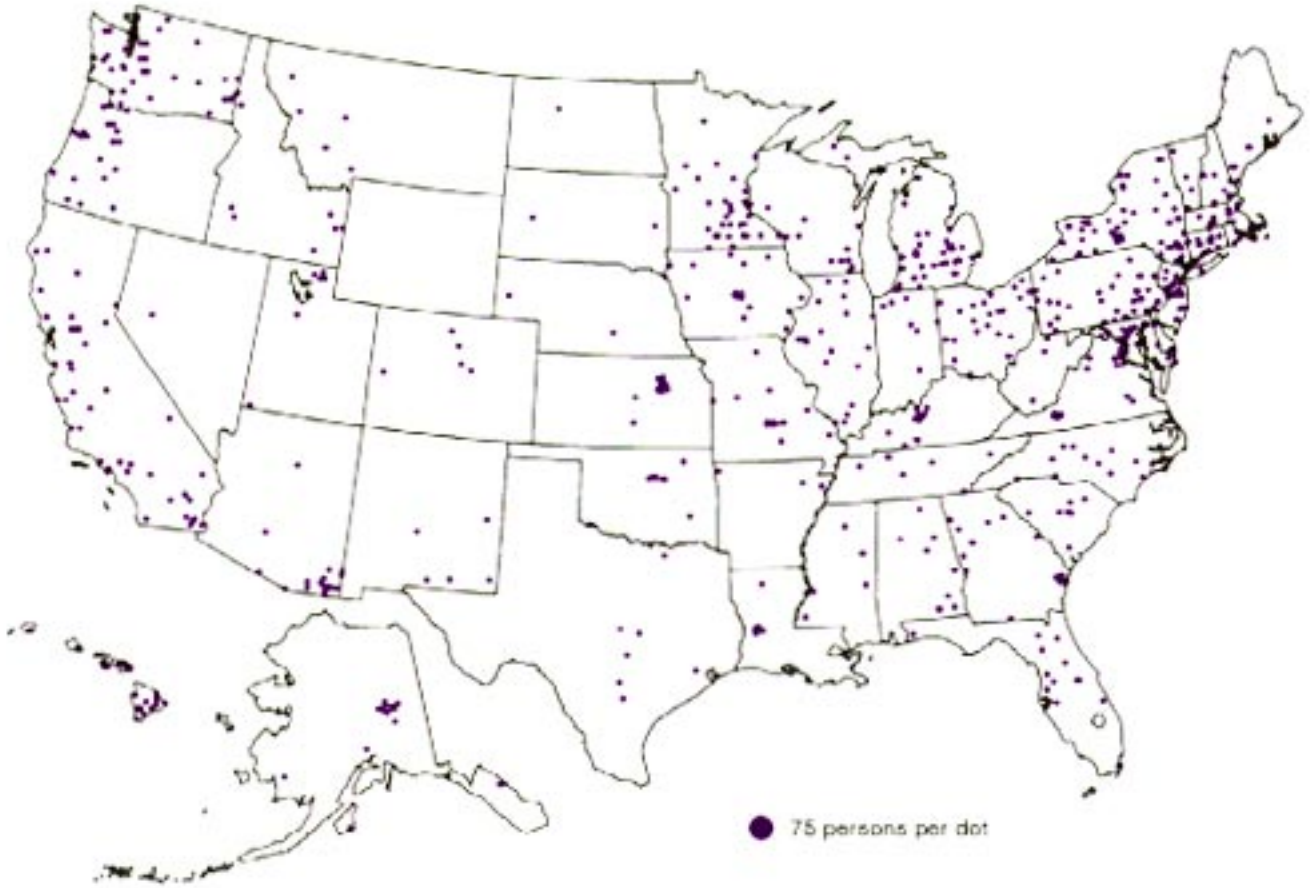
The nonmetro and rural metro Filipino population, 1990



Data source: Bureau of the Census.
Map prepared by Economic Research Service.

Figure 6

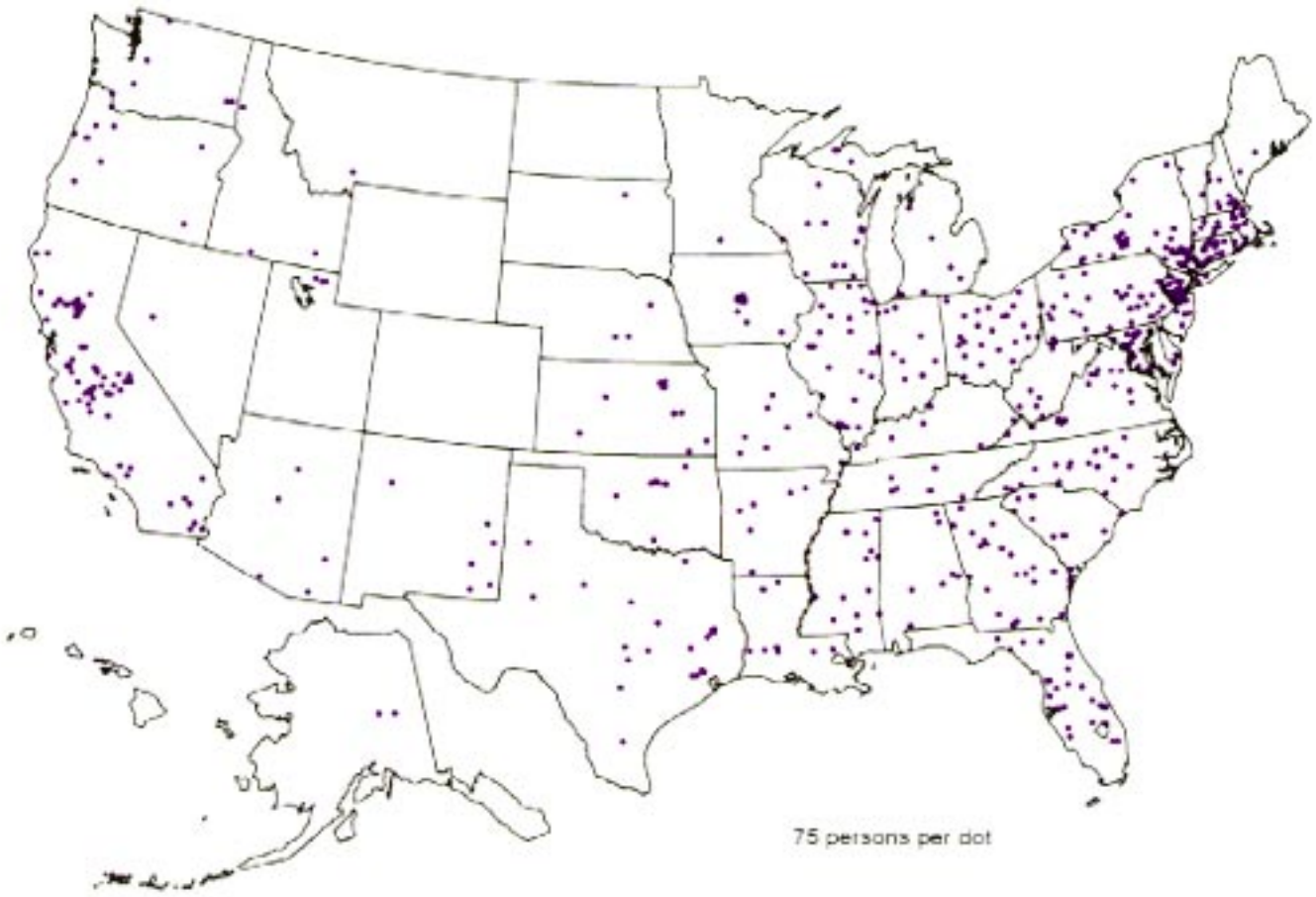
The nonmetro and rural metro Korean population, 1990



Data source: Bureau of the Census.
Map prepared by Economic Research Service.

Figure 7

The nonmetro and rural metro Asian Indian population, 1990



Data source: Bureau of the Census.
Map prepared by Economic Research Service.

Figure 8

The nonmetro and rural metro Indochinese population, 1990

Data source: Bureau of the Census.
Map prepared by Economic Research Service.